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SUBJECT: UN/IRAQ: COUNCIL PRESS STATEMENTS FOLLOWING THE
SECRETARY'S PRESENTATION

REF: USUN 299

1. (U) SUMMARY: COUNCIL MEMBERS, STATEMENTS TO THE PRESS FOLLOWING SECRETARY POWELL'S PRESENTATION CLOSELY REFLECTED THE CONTENT OF THEIR PREPARED NATIONAL STATEMENTS MADE IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, AND LARGELY FELL ALONG PREDICTABLE LINES. WHEN ASKED IF SECRETARY POWELL'S PRESENTATION CONVINCED HIM OF ANYTHING, FRENCH FM DE VILLEPIN RESPONDED THAT THE PRESENTATION CONTAINED "NO ABSOLUTE PROOF, ONLY SUSPICIONS." CHINESE FM TANG STRESSED THAT INFORMATION FROM MEMBER STATES SHOULD BE PROVIDED TO THE INSPECTORS, WHO ARE THE APPROPRIATE AGENTS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANALYZING THIS INFORMATION. GERMAN FM FISCHER RESPONDED TO MANY QUESTIONS FROM THE PRESS-- INCLUDING ONE ON THE ILLEGAL EXPORT OF GERMAN GOODS TO IRAQ -- BY RECOMMENDING ONGOING, INCREASED AND STRENGTHENED INSPECTIONS. BULGARIAN FM PASSY NOTED THAT THE RIFT BETWEEN THE U.S. AND SOME EUROPEAN STATES WAS DECREASING, WHILE THE POSSIBILITY FOR A UNANIMOUS SOLUTION WAS INCREASING. SYRIAN PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE WEHBE STATED THAT SECRETARY POWELL'S PRESENTATION WAS THE FIRST TIME HE HAD HEARD ABOUT ANY LINK BETWEEN IRAQ AND "SO-CALLED" TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS, AND STATED THAT HE WAS PLEASED BY FISCHER'S "PEACEFUL" STATEMENT. IRAQI PR AL-DOURI PRESENTED A PREPARED STATEMENT TO THE PRESS, AND NOTED THAT HE WOULD DEFER A MORE DETAILED REACTION PENDING THE PRESENTATION OF THE OFFICIAL GOI RESPONSE LATER IN THE AFTERNOON. (COMMENT: THE HEAVY RELIANCE ON PREVIOUSLY PREPARED TEXTS, EVEN IN ADDRESSING THE PRESS, SUGGESTED THAT DELEGATIONS HAD YET TO DETERMINE HOW TO RESPOND TO THE SECRETARY'S PRESENTATION. END COMMENT.) END SUMMARY.

FRANCE

2. (U) FM DE VILLEPIN OF FRANCE THANKED SECRETARY POWELL FOR SHARING HIS INFORMATION AND "SUSPICIONS," A TERM HE REPEATEDLY USED IN DESCRIBING THE CONTENT OF THE PRESENTATION. VILLEPIN IS NOW EXPECTING ANSWERS FROM IRAQ, WHICH MUST ANSWER. HE NOTED THAT FRANCE MUST COMPARE THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY SECRETARY POWELL WITH ITS OWN INTELLIGENCE. VILLEPIN SEES AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENHANCE INSPECTIONS, UNDER UNSCR 1441. REPEATING ELEMENTS OF HIS STATEMENTS TO THE COUNCIL (REFTEL), HE DEEMED THE COUNCIL COULD ASK MORE OF IRAQ, AS WELL AS DOUBLE OR TRIPLE THE NUMBER OF INSPECTORS, INCREASE THE INTELLIGENCE PROVIDED TO INSPECTORS, AND ENHANCE THE CAPACITY FOR AERIAL OBSERVATION. ALL OF THIS WAS NECESSARY BEFORE RESORTING TO FORCE, HE SAID. ASKED IF SECRETARY POWELL'S PRESENTATION CONVINCED HIM IN ANY RESPECT, VILLEPIN RESPONDED THAT THE PRESENTATION CONTAINED "NO ABSOLUTE PROOF, ONLY SUSPICIONS." QUESTIONED FURTHER ABOUT IRAQ'S ONGOING DECEPTION, VILLEPIN STRESSED THAT THERE ARE INSPECTORS ON THE GROUND, WHO ARE "THE COUNCIL'S EYES AND EARS." SO LONG AS INSPECTORS ARE "IN A POSITION TO DO WORK, WE REMAIN IN THE FIRST PHASE" OF 1441. IF THE SITUATION REACHES A DEADLOCK IN THE VIEW OF THE INSPECTORS, WHICH WILL BE COMMUNICATED THROUGH A REPORT, "THEN WE WILL HAVE REACHED THE SECOND PHASE AND SHOULD BEGIN TO WORK ON A NEW RESOLUTION."

3. (U) HE STATED THERE WAS NO NEED FOR A NEW UNSCR, GIVEN THE

CONTINUED PRESENCE OF INSPECTORS ON THE GROUND. THE FM NOTED THAT EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE THROUGH 1441 AS LONG AS THERE IS PROGRESS, AND THAT THE FIFTEEN MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL, "NOT ANY ONE COUNTRY" -- HAVE THE FULL RESPONSIBILITY TO DECIDE THE PATH FORWARD. QUESTIONED ON THE STATE OF THE FRENCH-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP, HE NOTED THAT THE CENTURIES-OLD FRIENDSHIP OF THE TWO NATIONS EXISTS TODAY AND WOULD EXIST TOMORROW. WHEN ASKED IF FRANCE WOULD COUNTER THE U.S., ONLY TO JOIN FORCES IN THE END, HE EXPRESSED A PREFERENCE FOR SOLIDARITY, YET EMPHASIZED ABOVE ALL THE CORE FUNCTION OF THE UN IN ADDRESSING THE SITUATION. (COMMENT: VILLEPIN SEEMED ILL AT EASE, SOMEWHAT DEFENSIVE, AND GENERALLY UNPREPARED TO DEAL WITH THE SITUATION AT HAND. HE EXPLICITLY IGNORED A PARTICULAR (UNIDENTIFIED) JOURNALIST WHO REPEATEDLY CALLED OUT A QUESTION ABOUT VILLEPIN'S VIEWS OF WHETHER OR NOT IRAQ WAS IN MATERIAL BREACH. END COMMENT.)

CHINA

14. (U) IN COMMENTS TO THE PRESS WHICH WERE ENTIRELY CONSISTENT WITH CHINA'S PREVIOUS STATEMENT TO THE COUNCIL, CHINESE FM TANG WELCOMED SECRETARY POWELL'S INFORMATION AND EVIDENCE, WHICH HE FOUND CONSISTENT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF UNSCR 1441 AND THE NEED FOR GREATER TRANSPARENCY. THE STATEMENT REINFORCED HIS BELIEF THAT THE INSPECTIONS MUST CONTINUE. HE STRESSED THAT INFORMATION IN THE HANDS OF MEMBER STATES SHOULD BE HANDED OVER TO THE INSPECTORS. TANG NOTED THAT IRAQI RESPONSE IS NOW CRITICAL, AND URGED ALL EFFORTS TO BE FOCUSED ON ENSURING AN IRAQI STATE WITHOUT WMD. HE NOTED THAT WHILE THERE IS "MUCH TALK OF WAR," CHINA STILL FAVORS A POLITICAL SOLUTION THROUGH THE SECURITY COUNCIL NO MATTER HOW LITTLE HOPE FOR PEACE REMAINS, AND WILL CONTINUE TO WORK WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TOWARD THIS END.

GERMANY

15. (U) GERMAN FM FISCHER STATED THAT THE SECRETARY'S PRESENTATION NEEDED CAREFUL EXAMINATION. REFERRING TO SADDAM HUSSEIN'S REGIME AS "INHUMANE AND BRUTAL," HE NOTED THAT IRAQ MUST PROVIDE CLEAR ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS RAISED BY BOTH THE SECRETARY AND DR. BLIX. THE NEXT STEP IN THIS PROCESS WILL BE THE TRIP BY BLIX AND EL-BARADEI TO IRAQ, FOLLOWED BY AN UPDATE TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL. FISCHER SAID THE DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES OF MILITARY ACTION WERE CLEAR, AND HE ARGUED THAT INSPECTIONS REQUIRED MORE TIME. INSPECTIONS, HE SAID, SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED IN ORDER TO "GUARANTEE FULL AND LASTING DISARMAMENT." HE SAW "THE FRENCH PROPOSAL" (PRESUMABLY REFERRING TO AUGMENTING THE NUMBER OF INSPECTORS AND OTHER INSPECTIONS CAPACITY) AS "INTERESTING AND WORTH CONSIDERATION." IN RESPONSE TO A QUERY ABOUT IRAQ'S ONGOING DECEPTION OF INSPECTORS, FISCHER CALLED THE INSPECTIONS TEAMS "VERY IMPORTANT" AND STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUED INSPECTIONS. FISCHER DECLINED TO COMMENT ON WHETHER IRAQ WAS IN MATERIAL BREACH, TRYING TO SIDESTEP THE QUESTION BY EXCUSING HIMSELF ON THE GROUNDS THAT HE WAS NOT AN INTELLIGENCE EXPERT AND THAT "EXPERTS MUST DECIDE." PRESSED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THIS WAS A POLITICAL AND NOT AN INTELLIGENCE DECISION, FISCHER ALLOWED THAT IT WAS A POLITICAL DECISION THAT HAD TO BE BASED ON FACT. PRESSED ON PAST ILLEGAL EXPORTS TO IRAQ BY GERMAN NATIONALS, FISCHER JUDGED SUCH CASES TO BE "IN THE PAST," NOTING SUBSEQUENT CHANGES IN GERMAN EXPORT REGULATIONS. HE STATED THAT A STRENGTHENED INSPECTIONS REGIME WOULD FURTHER HINDER REPETITION OF SUCH INFRACTIONS. (COMMENT: PERHAPS REFLECTING THE CONVICTION OF GERMANY'S POSITION, FISCHER'S DELIVERY, PARTICULARLY AS COMPARED TO VILLEPIN'S, WAS SMOOTH AND DELIBERATE. DESPITE APPEARING COLLECTED, HE WAS NONETHELESS PUT ON THE DEFENSIVE BY A NUMBER OF THE TOUGHER QUESTIONS. END COMMENT.)

BULGARIA

16. (U) BULGARIAN FM PASSY OPENED HIS STATEMENT BY SHARING HIS BELIEF THAT THERE IS STILL A CHANCE FOR A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION BASED ON PRODUCTIVE COOPERATION. HE ASSERTED THAT, ALTHOUGH STILL PRESENT, THE "DIFFERENCES" BETWEEN THE U.S. AND SOME EUROPEAN STATES WERE DECREASING, WHILE THE CHANCES OF FINDING A SOLUTION UNANIMOUSLY ARE INCREASING. IN RESPONSE TO A

QUERY, HE NOTED THAT A NEW RESOLUTION WAS NOT OUT OF THE QUESTION. PASSY WAS QUESTIONED ABOUT BULGARIA,S ABSENCE FROM THE DECLARATION OF EUROPEAN STATES SUPPORTING THE U.S., TO WHICH HE RESPONDED BY NOTING HIS NATION,S SUPPORT OF THE DECLARATION AND STATED THAT BULGARIA JOINS THE COMMON DEMARCHE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE EU. FM PASSY SAID SECRETARY POWELL,S PRESENTATION CONTAINED "VERY CONVINCING ARGUMENTS, FOR WMD, FOR TERRORISM, FOR HUMAN RIGHTS" SAYING HE FELT MORE HOPEFUL NOW THAN HE DID ON HIS FLIGHT FROM SOFIA. IN CLOSING, HE MENTIONED THAT IRAQ COULD STILL BE GIVEN ANOTHER CHANCE TO HELP FIND A PEACEFUL SOLUTION.

SYRIA

17. (U) SYRIAN PERMREP WEHBE NOTED THAT HE HAD LISTENED TO SECRETARY POWELL,S PRESENTATION AND WAS PLEASED TO HEAR THE "PEACEFUL TUNE (SIC)" EXPRESSED BY FISCHER, WHICH CAPTURED THE FEELING OF "MOST MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL." HE STRESSED THAT THE COUNCIL MUST BE THE CENTER OF ANY SOLUTION AND THIS SOLUTION MUST BE FOCUSED ON PEACEFUL MEANS. HE URGED THAT ALL OF THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY SECRETARY POWELL BE GIVEN TO IAEA AND UNMOVIC FOR ANALYSIS. WEHBE NOTED THAT MANY MINISTERS ELABORATED ON THE "DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES" WAR WOULD HAVE ON THE IRAQI PEOPLE AND THE REGION, AND STATED THAT WAR WOULD REPRESENT A FAILURE BY THE COUNCIL AND THE WORLD ORDER TO RESPECT THE PRINCIPLES OF THE UN CHARTER. HE SAID THAT IRAQ SHOULD COOPERATE FULLY AND PROACTIVELY, NOTING STATEMENTS BY HIGH LEVEL IRAQI OFFICIALS ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THEY WERE "VERY READY TO COOPERATE," AS WELL AS THEIR INVITATION TO HAVE BLIX AND EL-BARADEI BACK TO BAGHDAD ON 8 FEBRUARY. HE ALSO NOTED THAT HE HAD NOT HEARD, "BEFORE OR NOW," OF A LINK BETWEEN IRAQ AND "SO-CALLED" TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS. HE CITED "A NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE TWO DAYS AGO THAT WE ALL HAVE SEEN" THAT SHOWED THE U.S. LACKED EVIDENCE LINKING IRAQ TO TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS. HE ALSO ASSERTED THAT A UK STATEMENT FROM FEBRUARY 5 ACKNOWLEDGED THE ABSENCE OF INTELLIGENCE LINKING IRAQ TO TERRORISM. WHEN ASKED IF IRAQ WAS CURRENTLY IN MATERIAL BREACH, WEHBE SIMPLY WALKED AWAY FROM THE PODIUM.

IRAQ

18. (U) IRAQI PERMREP AL-DOURI ARRIVED WITH A PREPARED STATEMENT. HE REMARKED THAT SECRETARY POWELL,S PRESENTATION DID NOT ACHIEVE ITS INTENDED RESULTS. HE STATED THAT COUNCIL MEMBERS HAD MADE CLEAR THAT ANY INFORMATION SHOULD BE PROVIDED TO THE INSPECTORS AND THAT THE INSPECTIONS ARE SUCCESSFUL AND WORKING. FOR THIS REASON, HE CONTINUED, OTHER MEANS TO DISARM THEM SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED. HE CALLED SECRETARY POWELL,S PRESENTATION "A SET OF ACCUSATIONS EASILY REFUTED," AND IN CLOSING SAID THAT IRAQ WOULD CONTINUE WITH THE INSPECTIONS IN A PROACTIVE MANNER. (COMMENT: AL-DOURI WAS FAIRLY CUT AND DRIED, DEFLECTING PRESS INTEREST BY TELLING THE ASSEMBLED STAKEOUT TO WATCH THE LIVE PRESS FEED FROM BAGHDAD LATER IN THE AFTERNOON. END COMMENT.)

NEGROPONTE